

Efforts on to make network of 200 airports operational: PM Narendra Modi

Arvind Chauhan / TNN / Oct 20, 2021, 20:21 IST



Prime Minister Narendra Modi has inaugurated Kushinagar International Airport.

KUSHINAGAR: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday inaugurated UP's ninth airport, which is the state's third international airport, in Kushinagar. The airport will soon start direct flight service to New Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata.

Speaking on the occasion, the PM said that his government was trying to build a network of over 200 airports, heliports and waterports for seaplanes over the next three-four years.

Built at the cost of Rs 260 crore with the state's longest runway of 3,200 meters, the Kushinagar airport received its first flight from Sri Lanka with over 100 delegation, including Buddhist monks and pilgrims.

Speaking on the occasion, the PM said, "India has been the spiritual and inspiration center for followers of Buddhism. The facility of Kushinagar international airport is a way of showing respect for their devotion. This land of Gautam Buddha is now directly connected to the world and landing of a Sri Lankan airline at the airport is like greeting it."

"Fortunately, today is Maharishi Valmiki Jayanti as well and by his inspiration, with the efforts of all, the country is working for the welfare of all. This international airport is the result of decades of expectations and wishes. As a curious spiritual person and representative of Purvanchal, there is a satisfaction within me for fulfilling the commitment," said Modi.

Sri Lankan sports minister Namal Rajapaksa, who led the Sri Lankan delegation, said: "It is a great gesture of PM Modi to especially invite Sri Lankan airlines to be the first international carrier to land at Kushinagar International Airport."

The PM said that special attention was being given to develop the Buddhist circuit. "Development of Kushinagar is among the priorities of the state and Central government. Places related to Buddha like Sarnath, Shravasti, Bodh Gaya, Lumbini, Vaishali, Rajgir and Sankisa are a few hours away from Kushinagar. Therefore, apart from Indian followers of Buddhism, this area is going to be important for people of Sri Lanka, Thailand, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Vietnam, Cambodia and other countries for spirituality and tourism," he said while addressing from airport premises.

"The Kushinagar airport will help develop a business-oriented eco system. Tourism, travel business such as taxi, hotels and others will benefit and will further create job opportunities for youth. Soon, the airport will be directly connected with New Delhi," Modi said.

"With Kushinagar, now the state has nine airports, including three internationals while work on Jewar international airport is under way. Apart from these, airports are also being developed in Ayodhya, Aligarh, Azamgarh, Chitrakoot, Moradabad and Shravasti. This will strengthen the state's air connectivity," said the PM.

"In the past few years, the country has emphasized on air connectivity in those distant remote locations, where no one had even imagined. In the last four-years under the Udan Yojana, 900 new routes have been approved out of which 350 routes are operational. More than 50 defunct airports have been made operational. In the next four years, we will try to develop over 200 airports, heliport and seaplane water networks in the country," Modi said.

Emphasizing on civil use of defence-run airports, PM Modi said, "At five airports eight new pilot training academies are going to be set up. Rules for training at airports have been made easy. Further, an ecosystem is being developed for drone manufacturing, operating in the country for purposes like agriculture, health, disaster management and defence."

Union civil aviation minister Jyotiraditya Scindia said that direct flights between Delhi and Kushinagar will be operational by November 26, while from December 18 direct flights will also operate for Mumbai and Kolkata. "In all, 17 airports will be operational in the newly emerging Uttar Pradesh," he added.

"Since independence, there were 64 airports in the country, but in the past seven years of the Modi regime, the country has added 54 new airports, taking the total to 118," Scindia said.

Reiterating the same, CM Yogi Adityanath said, "In UP, 11 more airports are being developed including two international airports are being developed including at Ayodhya and Jewar."